

1 GOLF CLUB ACCESSORY

2 Related Application

3 This invention is a divisional of U.S. Application No.
4 09/905,302 filed July 16, 2001, the contents of which is
5 incorporated herein, no new matter is added.

6
7 Field of the Invention

8 This invention relates generally to golf and more
9 particularly to a golf club accessory for use in the retrieval
10 of a golf tee.

11
12 Background Information

13 The game of golf is an immensely popular sporting activity
14 played throughout the world. In the most simplified form, the
15 game is played on a golf course consisting of eighteen holes,
16 each hole having a tee, a fairway, and a putting green. A skill
17 is required by avoiding sand traps, water hazards, and roughs.
18 The premise of the game requires ball control for purposes of
19 completing a round of golf in as few strokes as possible. The
20 game of golf employs the use of various clubs that provide the
21 golfer with tools to control distances that a golf ball is
22 advanced. For instance, when a golfer puts a ball into play for
23 a particular hole, the golfer must strike the ball from a tee
24 surface in hopes of placing the ball within a hole located on a
25 distant putting green. If the length of distance between the tee
26 surface and the putting green is long, the golfer may typically

1 employ a club historically called a "wood" or "driver" to
2 project the ball as far as possible toward the putting green.
3 The rules of the game allow the golfer to place the golf ball
4 upon a golf ball tee for this initial tee off. The golf ball
5 tee may be used on each of the eighteen holes.

6 Unique to the game of golf is the ability for any age
7 individual to compete and enjoy the game. The use of a handicap
8 system allows an individual, despite their ability and skill to
9 compete with fellow golfers. In light of this, elderly persons
10 and those with minor physical ailments can fully enjoy and
11 compete in the game, even if they have difficulty in bending
12 over which is a necessary function for placement and retrieval
13 of golf balls and golf tees. For instance, once a golfer has
14 hit a golf ball from the tee, the need to retrieve the golf ball
15 tee is required. However, many individuals are too lazy or
16 simply choose not to bend over due to the inconvenience or
17 physical limitations. The result is discarded golf tees laying
18 on the tee playing surface. This leaves an unsightly playing
19 surface and can be hazardous to maintenance people and
20 equipment, for example mowers which are employed to provide a
21 short grass on the tee surface.

22 If an aluminum tee is used, the discarded tee can actually
23 damage reel mowers. Typically the tees are very inexpensive and
24 if the tee is not in a convenient position to pick-up, the tee
25 is abandoned by the golfer. Further, very seldom will a golfer
26 pick-up a spent tee left by another golfer.

1 For these reasons there exists a need for a low cost device
2 that will assist a golfer in the retrieval of a golf tee, and
3 make it so convenient that they may pick up other discarded
4 tees.

5

6 DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

7 U.S. patent number 5,011,150 discloses a golf tee retrieval
8 system consisting of a hook and loop system coupled to a golf
9 tee and the end of the shaft of a golfclub. The inventor
10 employs the hook and loop system by placing a piece of the
11 "Velcro" on the tee and the mating portion on the end of the
12 golfclub shaft. A golfer would utilize the golfclub in its
13 ordinary and conventional manner and after striking a golf ball
14 would invert the golfclub and press the hook and loop system
15 together for purposes of retrieving the golf tee. A
16 disadvantage to such a system is that the golf tee is typically
17 laying on its side and thus the placement of the hook and loop
18 on the end of a tee makes it impractical for ball retrieval. In
19 addition, placing of the material on top of the tee can offset
20 the golf ball wherein even a wind could cause the golf ball to
21 become dislodged from the tee.

22 U.S. patent number 2,154,989 discloses an attachment for
23 golf clubs that sits on the end of a golf club shaft and employs
24 semi-circular hoops for purposes for engaging the golf tee.
25 This device requires the golfer to manipulate the tee through
26 the holes requiring a developed skill in order to use the golf

1 tee retrieval.

2 U.S. patent number 5,672,121 discloses an apparatus for
3 positioning and retrieving of golf balls and tees. This
4 invention employs a separate apparatus that is used independent
5 of a golf club thus requiring additional items to be placed in
6 a golf club bag. In addition, this device uses an elaborate
7 retrieval having mechanical parts that can be easily damaged by
8 placement in a bag especially should the bags be filled with
9 graphite shafts easily scratched or otherwise damaged when
10 unrelated items are placed into the golfbag.

11 U.S. patent number 4,951,947 discloses yet another golf
12 ball teeing device which further allows for retrieval of a golf
13 tee if the golf tee remains in an upright position. This item
14 would be impractical for most golfers that drive a golf ball
15 because the tee is laying in a horizontal position. In addition
16 this requires the use of a separate utensil again placed within
17 a golf bag.

18

19 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 The present invention satisfies this need through provision
21 of a golf club accessory device that is used in combination with
22 a golf club. The device has a base with a top side surface and
23 a bottom side surface. The top side surface has at least two
24 spaced-apart flexible members used for capturing a golf tee.
25 The base is secured to the handle end of a golf club shaft
26 whereby the golf club can be used for its intended purpose of

1 striking a golf ball from a tee. The accessory device or
2 flexible fingers may be molded, mounted or otherwise
3 incorporated into the grip of the golf club. The flexible
4 members are used to retrieve a golf ball tee by inverting the
5 golf club shaft, allowing the shaft to operate as an arm
6 extension allowing tee retrieval without the need for the golfer
7 to bend over.

8 It is an objective of the invention to provide a golf tee
9 retrieval device that is easy and economical to use in
10 conjunction with a conventional golf club which will facilitate
11 the retrieval of a golf tee when laying on the ground.

12 Another objective of the instant invention is to disclose
13 a golf club accessory that is inexpensive and can be readily
14 discarded after excessive use.

15 Still another objective of the instant invention is to make
16 the retrieval of golf tees more simplistic whereby an individual
17 would be more likely to pick up golf tees discarded by other
18 golfers.

19 Still another objective of the instant invention is to
20 provide a golf club accessory that does not inhibit the use of
21 a golf club in its ordinary and conventional manner and further
22 provides a spacer when placed in a golf bag to prevent moisture
23 or other debris from attaching to the end of the golf club grip
24 thereby preventing the golfer's hand from touching items that
25 may have otherwise contacted the tip of the handgrip.

26 Other objectives and advantages of this invention will

1 become apparent from the following description taken in
2 conjunction with the accompanying drawings wherein are set
3 forth, by way of illustration and example, certain embodiments
4 of this invention. The drawings constitute a part of this
5 specification and include exemplary embodiments of the present
6 invention and illustrate various objects and features thereof.

7

8 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

9 FIG. 1 is a perspective of a golf club handle and tee
10 retriever of this invention grasping a tee shown in phantom
11 lines;

12 FIG. 2A is a perspective of the tee retriever showing
13 a spike fastening embodiment;

14 FIG. 2B is a top view of the tee retriever of
15 this invention;

16 FIG. 3A is a perspective of a golf club grip and integral
17 tee retriever;

18 FIG. 3B is a cross-section of a tee retriever showing a
19 tubular fastening embodiment;

20 FIG. 4 is a perspective of the tee retriever showing a
21 "Velcro" fastening embodiment;

22 FIG. 5 is a perspective of the tee retriever showing
23 a screw fastening embodiment;

24 FIG. 6 is a side view of another embodiment of the fingers
25 of this invention;

26 FIG. 7 is a side view of another embodiment of the finger

1 of this invention;

2 FIG. 8 is a side view of another embodiment of the fingers
3 of this invention;

4 FIG. 9 is a side view of another embodiment of the fingers
5 of this invention;

6 FIG. 10 is a side view of another embodiment of
7 the fingers of this invention; and

8 FIG. 11 is a side view of another embodiment of
9 the fingers of this invention.

10

11 DETAILED DESCRIPTION

12 Golf clubs are made with an elongated flexible shaft of
13 steel, fiberglass, graphite or other material. At one end of
14 the shaft a head is attached. The head which may be of steel,
15 titanium or other exotic combinations of materials, is the
16 component of the golf club that strikes the golf ball. At the
17 other end of the shaft is the handle which is grasped in the
18 hands of the golfer. This handle end of the club usually has an
19 outer grip made of some material, e. g. leather or rubber,
20 which facilitates the intimate contact between the golfer's
21 hands and the club.

22 The tee retriever 10, or fingers 25, shown in FIG. 1, may
23 be molded, mounted or otherwise incorporated on the handle end
24 of a golf club shaft (not shown) or likewise included in the
25 grip 12. The grip 12 has a hollow tubular body which tightly
26 surrounds the handle of the club and is usually secured in place

1 by adhesive between the grip and handle. The tee retriever 10
2 is mounted on the butt end of the grip 12 and has a plurality of
3 resilient and flexible fingers 25 (shown in FIG. 2A), the free
4 ends of which are spaced-apart from each other a distance which
5 is less than the diameter of the golf tee 13. The tee 13 is
6 held in the resilient grasp of the fingers which are forced
7 apart by the body of the tee. The length of the fingers 25 is
8 at least equal to the diameter of the largest portion of the
9 tee. The tee retriever 10 has a base 21 sized and shaped to
10 approximate the dimensions of the butt end of the grip 12. The
11 base has a bottom surface 44a (shown in FIG. 4) which contacts
12 and is fastened to the grip 12. The top side surface of the
13 base 21 carries the fingers 25.

14 As shown in FIG. 1, the grip 12 and retriever 10, or
15 flexible fingers 25, may be molded or otherwise formed as an
16 integral component for the golf club. Also, the retriever may
17 be included with new grips by placing the base between the ends
18 of the shafts and the tubular ends of the grips so that the
19 mounted grips hold the retrievers in place.

20 FIG. 2A shows a tee retriever 23 having a base 21
21 supporting resilient flexible fingers 25. The free ends of the
22 fingers carry enlargements 26 shown as spherical, though other
23 shapes can be used. The enlargements 26 operate to prevent the
24 tee from escaping from the retriever due to the resilience of
25 the fingers. The bottom surface of the base 21 has a spike 22
26 for fastening the retriever to the grip and handle of the golf

1 club. When the spike 22 is driven into the end of the grip and
2 shaft, it is frictionally held in place. The fingers 25 extend
3 outwardly parallel to the axis of the shaft and do not interfere
4 with the normal use of the club.

5 FIG. 2B shows a typical orientation of the fingers within
6 the periphery of the base 21. As shown, the enlargements 26 are
7 not in contact with each other, however, such an arrangement is
8 possible.

9 FIG. 3A shows another embodiment 30 of the retriever in
10 which the fingers 25 are integrally molded into the butt end of
11 the grip. The tubular extension of the grip is placed over the
12 handle of the golf club in the conventional manner. FIG. 3B
13 shows the retriever as an add-on with the accessory base 32
14 formed as a tubular extension 35 to fit over the butt end of the
15 golf club grip and handle.

16 In FIG. 4, the retriever embodiment 40 has a "Velcro"
17 material affixed to the bottom surface 44a of base 42. A
18 complimentary strip 44b of "Velcro" is affixed to the butt end
19 of the grip 12. When the "Velcro" strips are mated, the
20 retriever 40 is fastened to the grip 12.

21 FIG. 5 shows another retriever embodiment 50 with a
22 threaded screw 54 extending from the bottom surface 52 of the
23 base. The use of the threaded screw between the retriever and
24 the shaft provides a more positive connection.

25 In FIG.s 6-11, various shapes of the fingers are
26 illustrated. Each of the embodiments have structural elements

1 which frictionally engage the golf tee and retain it until
2 removed by the golfer. For example, FIG. 6 shows arrow head
3 fingers 61 that facilitates the capture of a discarded tee by
4 movement in one direction yet prevents the tee from freely
5 escaping. This allows the tee to be picked up off the ground
6 and brought to the up-right position of the golfer.

7 FIG. 7 shows a plurality of cylindrical fingers 71 with
8 rounded free ends. The cylindrical sides of several fingers
9 simultaneously grip the length of the tee.

10 FIG. 8 shows conical or pyramidal fingers 81 wherein the
11 bases of the projections overlap and grasp the tee.

12 FIG. 9 shows another form of columnar fingers 91 with
13 varying circumferences along the length of each column. The
14 overlapping enlarged circumferential areas hold the tee.

15 FIG. 10 shows fingers formed as semi-loops 101. The ends
16 of the semi-loops 101 are attached to the base with the curved
17 intermediate portions forming the free ends of the fingers. The
18 semi-loops are closer together than the diameter of a tee.

19 FIG. 11 shows cylindrical fingers with a series of
20 projections spaced about the entire circumferential surface 111.

21 The retriever may be made of plastics or metals or
22 combinations thereof which have the requisite properties of
23 lightness, flexibility and resiliency. They may be made in one
24 piece or components which are subsequently assembled.

25 It is to be understood that while I have illustrated and
26 described certain forms of my invention, it is not to be limited